of milk. She is not permitted to read, sew, or to do anything that will 'arouse or stir the blood.' 846

Omens are read from the position of mongoloid spots on the newborn baby's body. They are said to represent marks put on in a previous existence and their presence proves that the child was then a human being. A blue spot on the foot presages a life of travel. Any marks leading from the right shoulder to the left hip, the line that the royal riband takes, traditionally indicated a royal future; today, however, in the absence of royalty in Burma, such marks merely forecast a 'great' future for the child. 787 845

A child is constantly watched from the time of birth for signs of whose reincarnation it represents. This is a constant topic in the family conversations. 775

Any disfigurement in a newborn child is regarded as a carry-over of the parents' store of demerit, as well as the child's, from earlier existences. It is regarded with a sense of shame and sorrow.

Although multiple births are neither preferred nor desired, they are not looked upon with any marked anxiety nor are there any supernatural means employed to prevent them. 854 751

A number of things are done by parents to protect the newborn baby from malevolent influences. Before it is a month old, a tiger bone should be ground on a stone, together with a little water, and mixed with honey. This is fed to the child to ward off a mysterious infant illness associated with the tiger. A connection is believed to exist between the tiger and convulsions; some parents place a tiger skin under the mattress of the baby's bed to guard against such illness. A knife similarly placed is said to protect against illness in general.

To insure good health and well-being for the child, a white thread over which certain prayers have been recited may be given by a Buddhist monk and tied around the baby's wrists. People should refrain from making admiring remarks about a baby's growth; if they do so, the thread may be left on the baby's wrists to neutralize the harm that may come.

When the stump of the child's umbilical cord has dried and fallen off, it is kept and used as a medicine for any illness that befalls the child. A little of it is ground up and mixed with water for such purposes. [846]

A very close connection is believed to exist between mother and child during the nursing period. Certain observances are necessary. The mother must not eat tomatoes at this time, for they may appear in the baby's stools; for the same reason, she must abstain from green vegetables. Any falling out of her hair during the nursing stage is said to be caused by bubbles blown into her by the suckling baby. To prevent the milk supply from drying up, the nursing mother avoids fruits of astringent quality, such as pomegranates and buds of the banyan. She must also take care not to allow milk to fall on the floor and dry. 853

The baby is weaned very gradually, beginning at the age of about nine months to a year in most cases, although some children may be given the breast occasionally up to the age of two or three years. Weaning is facilitated by the mother's application of a bitter substance to her breasts. 862

23: Brant & Mi Mi Khaing E, I-5 (1949-1950)1951
AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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The Burmese baby is weaned very gradually, beginning at the age of nine 862 ●
months to a year in most cases. This is facilitated by the mother's application of
some bitter substance to her breasts.

From infancy an attempt is made to mold the child's features. The ears are 856
pulled outward and the bridge of the nose is pulled upward, to prevent a flat 826
nose. A protuberant, prominent forehead is disliked; to prevent it people play
at bumping foreheads with the child. To elongate its neck the child is held
under the chin when lifted up from its bath. After being dressed its limbs are
pulled straight and it is wrapped around, to insure straight growth. A baby girl's
nipples are squeezed to prevent her having a large bosom.

Naming. The Burmese believe that one's name can influence the course of 551
events in life; therefore the name of a child is chosen with care. Burmese personal
names consist of monosyllables that are selected in a rather intricate manner.
The thirty-three characters of the alphabet are traditionally divided into seven
groups, each corresponding to a day of the week. The first syllable in a personal
name begins with a letter belonging to the group of letters assigned to the par-
ticular day of the week on which the child was born. Another syllable begins
with a letter belonging to a day that is considered congenial to the day of birth.
In the urban centers the tendency nowadays is to follow these rules only for the
first term in the name. The syllables of the name stand for qualities of character,
physical beauty, various gems, wealth or prosperity. Boys' names usually denote
strength, success or brilliance, while grace, beauty, tenderness, and various
precious stones are the most common meanings of girls' names. A son is never
named syllable for syllable after his father, for this is considered disrespectful
and an obstruction to each other's prosperity. There is also a tendency to avoid
naming children after deceased relatives. Terms indicating large numbers, such as
million, *lakh* (one hundred thousand), sometimes appear in the names of both
sexes. An interesting contemporary example is the comic strip heroine of a leading
Rangoon daily newspaper, Than Than, literally "Million Million."

The name of the child is rather informally conferred by means of a feast to 553

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

852 [178] 301 854 [562] [868]

16. THE FIRST STEP.

of an inch thick. This custom is on the decline, and the ears of boys are not so generally pierced as they used to be. The *naddung* or women's ear-plug of gold is being replaced by the *nagát* with its slender stem (No. 241). With eldest-born girls the fête is frequently deferred until they are twelve or fourteen, and is then celebrated with all the more splendour (p. 14).

862 854

Burman children are not weaned until the second or third year. Nevertheless they begin to receive solid food as soon as they will take it. The illusion prevails that the earlier they do so the stronger they will be. It is a [165] chief source of infant sickness and mortality, and of the smallness of the families reared. A curious feature of Burman sociality is the promiscuous suckling of infants in the circle of relatives and friends.

855 858 302

Children's heads are shaved in more or less fanciful ways up to the ages of ten or twelve, after which the hair is allowed to grow long.

858 857 524

The road-fronts of the houses are always peopled with children. Children are equals and are free to roam through the neighbours' houses and plots, where they are kindly noticed. Adults take in- [854] terest in their games, and make kites and reels, boats, carts and other simple toys for them.

17. THE WOODEN CRADLE (SAUNGBAN).